

## Sleep On The Floor by MissFiction

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**Summary:**

Heavily based on the song of the same name by the Lumineers. You and Billy are longtime sweethearts. After a tragedy, you decide it is time to leave Hawkins for good, together.

## Sleep On The Floor

*Pack yourself a toothbrush dear,  
pack yourself a favourite blouse.  
Take a withdrawal slip,  
take all of your savings out.  
Cause if we don't leave this town,  
we might never make it out.  
I was not born to drown,*

*Baby come on.*

*Sleep On The Floor, The Lumineers*

It's hard to describe the melancholy feeling that had settled itself inside your chest, but it was always there. It had been for the last year or more for sure. Sometimes you did wonder whether it had taken up residence inside you much longer than that and perhaps you just hadn't had the good sense to notice it yet. In any case, it was a bittering agent you could find no relief from. The casual optimism you used to feel throughout your youth was officially laid to rest, and in its place was this pervasive sadness that coiled itself lovingly around your heart.

It was no secret that Billy Hargrove was experiencing much of the same sensation throughout his last year of high school, after having been forced into moving to Hawkins in Indiana from sunny California. However, unlike your ever-simmering dissatisfaction, his melancholic haze manifested itself in a brutal anger that constantly sizzled under his skin. It was a burning anger with jagged edges that caused him to lash out at even the slightest annoyance. Perhaps that was what drew you to Billy in your last year of high school in the first place, despite the fact that it caused nearly everyone else around him to draw back. It felt as though you were two sides of the same coin. You complimented and balanced each other in the sense that he

was highly combustible, and you were the inflammable tender heart he could never enkindle. With you around, Billy became gentler. With him, you became less muted.

It was such a relief when he finally came through the front door, even if you could barely recognize him in his suit and tie. Even his unruly curls were carefully styled and combed through. You saw him before he saw you; his crystalline eyes scanned the room searchingly before they came to rest on you in the recliner and flooded with something akin to relief. Your favourite chair had been pushed into the corner by the window to make space in the centre of the floor, but the sunlight streaming in against you did very little to warm your chilled skin. You offered him what you knew was an insincere watery smile, and he quickly crossed the room, reaching for you with both hands.

Without hesitating he threw his arms around your shoulders, pressing you tightly against him. "I heard from Neil this morning," he said quietly, just to you despite the number of people in the room side-eyeing him. "I mean, he was telling Susan, and..."

You squeezed tighter. You could feel every breath fill his lungs, and it made your eyes sting even more. He always pulled the emotion out of you. You hadn't even wanted to cry until you saw him. For once, you didn't even care that your disapproving mother was standing less than five feet away from the pair of you as he held you in his arms. She barely cast a look in your direction to acknowledge that he had come anyway.

"How are you holding up?" he asked, pulling back just enough to rest his hands against your damp cheek and look into your eyes. You shrug your shoulders, not really sure what to say. Instead, you brought your hand up to hold his in place against your cheek and simply breathed in the scent of his cologne. He may look different, but with your eyes closed he still smelled like home. Billy didn't ask again; instead, he stroked his thumb against your cheekbone sweetly to brush away the salty water that rolled down your cheeks.

Your mouth was dry when you eventually managed to croak, "He was a son of a bitch, you know." Billy merely nodded his head. You already knew that he knew, he didn't need to say anything to affirm

the sentiment with you. You had fled to his house in the middle of the night and climbed through his window more times in the last year than you could count on two hands, and he had sought refuge at yours an immeasurable amount as well. He allowed the silence to resonate between you until you felt able to go on. "I don't even know if I'm more sad or relieved that he's gone. How sick is that? He was a real son of a bitch, but he was still my dad."

The rest of the room was quiet, somber. You kept your voice low enough that you were confident only Billy could hear you speaking ill of the dead. The rest of the room was basically ignoring your existence anyway. The two of you were practically locked away in your own personal bubble, barely making an impact on the atmosphere. That's the way it always seemed to go when it came to events in your home, why should you expect a wake to be any different?

Eventually you were sick of crying, and you took Billy's hand from your cheek to intertwine your fingers instead. Mindlessly, you sniffled the last of your tears away and turned his hand over in yours, so you could run your fingers intimately over the pulse point in his wrist. "I can't stand this anymore, let's go to my room," you murmured.

Quietly, so as not to disturb the mourning in the room, the soft condolences and false remembrances of a man who didn't deserve the reminiscence, you led Billy down the hall to your bedroom. Nobody said a word to you as you passed through the small gathering, but you noticed a few of your mother's friends cast her a sympathetic look after appraising your exit. They probably assumed you didn't feel a thing, but you didn't care enough to try to convince them otherwise. Billy squeezed your fingertips. You squeezed back.

With the door shut quietly behind you, and you turned the lock just in case somebody eventually decided to investigate where you had disappeared to. Billy moved over to the window and cracked it open before lighting a cigarette in his fingertips and puffing a cloud of smoke into the cold outside air. The smell of them didn't bother you so much when it was lingering on his skin, but the scent wasn't your favourite when it was fresh. You sat on your bed and just watched him for a few minutes as the cigarette got smaller and smaller. Each

of you carefully avoided talking about the elephant in the room, but you were far from silent as you spoke softly about anything and everything to one another. Nothing of importance, nothing of any consequence, just settling into the comfort of each others' voices. Eventually he finishes his smoke, and you scoot over so he can come lie down next to you on your thin twin bed frame. He stamped out the butt on the ashtray you left on the window sill for him, shut the window to keep the chill out, and stretched out next to you. Neither of you spoke for a long few minutes after that. You blinked back some more tears, staring at the glowing star stickers on the ceiling even though it was too bright for them to actually emit any light.

Your next words were burning on your tongue, before you finally released them in a small voice. "...I just don't know what I'm supposed to do next, you know?"

Billy hesitated; you could feel an odd sort of tension causing his body to go rigid next to yours. You could feel him stretch his fingers nervously against your palm before he took his hand back and sat up on his elbow. He turned over on his hip, so he was facing you properly, caging in your reclined form with his arms on either side of your body. The space was already limited to begin with, but he forced you to focus completely on him. His gaze was soft, but his blue eyes crackled with an odd electricity that turned your stomach over in knots.

"Run away with me," he said. As if it was as simple as that, the words simply fell from his lips. "I mean it. What's keeping you here? Haven't we been talking about getting out for more than a year? Why not now, together? We've been drifting through this place for a *year* since graduation without making a change? I've got the car out front, we could leave *now* and never look back."

Your lips part with an answer at the ready, but the only sound you make is a sharp intake of breath as your heart throbs painfully in your chest. "Billy... How could we... We don't have much money, we'd have no where to go..."

The curls of his hair fall out of their carefully combed style and fall over his eyes as he looks down at you, searching your eyes for the answer your lips refuse to give him. He lifts one hand cautiously to

spread his fingers against your ribcage, to stroke your skin through the material of your dress. Imploring you, pulling you closer, simultaneously pressing a nervous kiss to your palm without breaking eye contact.

“Please don’t say no,” he begged, “We’ll *figure it out*. I’ve just got this crazy feeling that if we don’t leave this town now we might never make it out, and I know want to give you more than this fuckin’ town can offer us.”

You sat up, pushing him back but leaving your hands resting against his shoulders. For a moment you actually felt short on breath. “... *Yeah*.” You agreed softly.

“Yeah?” he repeated. The hopeful spark in his eyes made your heart swell in a way it hadn’t in months. You grinned back at him, holding his cheeks in your hands.

“Yeah. Yes, I want to go with you. Yes. I want to leave today, please tell me that’s possible. I think I might be crazy but yes, let’s go.”

Billy kissed you hard, holding you tightly against his chest until you couldn’t breath and started wriggling away. Your chest was flooding with an almost unfamiliar sensation of anticipation and excitement, a more sincere sensibility than you had felt in months. His fingers twisted in your hair, chasing your lips as you pulled away and nibbling your bottom lip when he captured you again. For a few moments, the nauseating melancholy that had its grips on you released its claws and you were able to enjoy the thrill of finally having the courage to make a decision that would change your lives, for better or worse. One of your favourite things about Billy was that he did not only wear his furious anger on his sleeve; he experienced most emotions so fully that they were almost tangible. In that way, they were contagious.

Laughter bubbled from your lips before you remembered to muffle the sound. If anyone were listening to the pair of you from outside these four walls, there was no way that they could understand your personal joyous occasion for what it was, despite the apparent tragedy that had supposedly occurred. You were crying again, but this time Billy’s eyes were shining along with yours. Without wanting

to plan anything further than how to get to the Camaro, you grabbed an old duffle bag from the back of your closet and began jamming articles of clothing into it haphazardly. There was something strangely liberating about the thought of twisting in the wind for a while. You scurried across the hall quietly to grab your shampoo, a toothbrush, and anything else you thought might be handy from the bathroom, but for the most part you were comfortable with leaving everything behind.

As you quietly crossed the hall again to return to your bedroom, you remembered your father's old camera was still sitting on the bookshelf collecting dust where it had been for the last several years. It had basically become little more than an ornament now. It was a piece of equipment that he'd stopped bothering to use around the time you had turned thirteen. You tiptoed in your socks towards the shelf, freezing as the floor creaked under your steps. No one came to investigate whether you were intending to return to the small wake, so you cautiously slipped the camera and an accompanying lens into your duffle before hurrying back to your room.

As soon as you came back into the room, Billy was on you again with another searing kiss before grabbing the bag from your hands and slipping out your bedroom window, the same way he had so many times before. Perhaps for the last time, you thought wryly. While he was gone you glanced around your room one last time, skittering your eyes around the posters and writing the decorated the walls, wondering what the room would become once you were no longer there to inhabit it. You couldn't imagine that your mother would preserve it for you.

An open notebook sat forgotten on your desk, which you quickly scooped up as well. You tore out a single sheet and wrote a brief note for your mother, so she wouldn't feel obligated to put out a missing person's report in two weeks when she got around to noticing. It only took about half of the torn page. Then you placed the book in your shoulder bag with your wallet and ID.

"Hey, you're not getting cold feet now, are you?" asked Billy from the window, clearly wondering what was taking so long. He was leaning against the window sill from the outside, your duffle evidently already stored in the Camaro. His smile is carefree, his eyes still

sparkling.

“Never,” you replied easily, leaving your short letter on your pillow. You folded the bedsheets down out of habit. For a moment you felt silly, but if Billy noticed he didn’t say a word.

He helped you step through the window pane and land on your feet, running for the car as fast as your feet would carry you. He slid over the hood to get into the driver’s seat as you hopped in feet-first through the window. You hung out the window to scream for freedom as the engine roared to life and sent you tearing down the street. Your house disappeared into the distance, though you didn’t care to watch, and you were struck by the notion that you weren’t going to miss it. While your worries still simmered under the surface, the feeling of Billy’s hand pulling the hem of your dress until you sat safely fully inside the car and the sound of him laughing loudly over the music blaring from his speakers was enough to set your heart at ease.

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The next stop to be made was Billy’s place. He didn’t plan to bother with leaving sentimental notes anywhere, he just wanted to pick up a few things: his trademark leather jacket, his wallet, a change of clothes or two, stuff like that. The trip inside was intended to be so short that he didn’t even want you to bother getting out of the car. You did anyways, of course, to see if Maxine was inside so you could tell her goodbye and make sure you had a way to contact each other if she needed you. Her relationship with Billy may have been strained through the last couple years, but over time you had become a good, well-loved mediator between the two of them.

By the time you had finished exchanging information with Max, and reassuring her that you would call in frequently, Billy was ready with backpack slung over his shoulder. When you glanced up at him from tearfully hugging his step-sister, you were somewhat relieved to see he was looking much more like himself. He had been handsome in his suit, but the Billy who wore his shirts unbuttoned with his leather jacket and tight jeans was the one you fell in love with. His hair had also gotten progressively more unkempt, likely a combination of his lack of care with the wind and your fingers combing through it for



the last fifteen minutes at least. Billy offered his step-sister a polite nod before reminding you that if you didn't get on the road soon you wouldn't get very far before it was dark. You gave Max a few more kind words and then headed back outside.

Billy followed quickly on your heels, tucking a stray \$50.00 bill into his wallet. He also tossed you an apple. You raised an eyebrow at him, but he merely shrugged. "Small price for Neil to pay to have me out of his life forever."

"Mm, I guess so," you concede. You took a bite out of the fruit, and then offered it back to him. He took a larger bite right over top of yours, chewing as you both climbed back into the Camaro. "I guess the next stop should be the bank, right? I don't have a lot of savings, but it'll be something for the trip anyway. How are you for gas?"

"Full tank," replied Billy, through his mouthful. He took your hand in his again, resting his arm on the console while he steered with the other. When he asked you to run away with him, he had been genuinely afraid that you were going to tell him to get out on his own, that you might choose the family that ignored you out of obligation rather than a life in the unknown with him. It still felt a little like a dream that you had really agreed, that you could be out of the state of Indiana before tomorrow morning and driving aimlessly towards a new life together without a care in the world. The idea of being adrift with you was not so daunting. There was no one else he'd rather be drifting with than you.

The bank was surprisingly busy for the middle of a Sunday morning, so you stood in line right on Billy's heels. He faced backwards leaning against the stanchion, ignoring the small shuffling movements of the line in favour of chatting amorously with you until the distance was more substantially worth the effort.

A woman behind you cleared her throat loudly to signal him to move along, which he ignored until the line moved another couple inches behind him, you were pretty sure just out of spite.

Finally, Billy reached the head of the line, and you were called to the next available teller behind him. You played with the sleeve of your dress nervously as you approached the older woman, who regarded

you over the rim of her half-moon glasses. They sat on the tip of her nose, kept in place by a beaded string around her neck. It wasn't that she seemed annoyed with you, but you weren't sure how to voice your desire to simply close everything out to her.

"How can I help you, miss?" she asked when you didn't speak up.

"Uhm," you stuttered hesitantly, turning towards Billy, who stood two tellers over.

"Yeah, I want to close the whole account," you heard Billy tell the man in a suit behind the desk. The man tried to deter him briefly, but Billy simply raised his hand to stop him. "My fiancée and I are moving from the State, so I won't be needing it." Billy turned, presumably to see if you were having any issues at your own desk and seemed surprised to find you already looking at him. He beamed at you, flicking his tongue against his canines and offering you a flirtatious wink.

You stifled a laugh, turning back towards your teller, whose eyes had followed yours. "I need a withdrawal slip, and to close my account please." She placed the sheet in front of you, and you didn't even read the document before you scrawled a signature over the paperwork. "We're moving out of State."

You took the cash from her with thanks, and then hurried back to the car, which Billy was already pulling up to the entrance. He passed you his wallet to count out your total before taking a backwoods road that you recognized as one that would take you directly through the middle of town and eventually lead you to the Interstate highway. You tucked his wallet into your shoulder bag at your feet for later, suddenly feeling too exhausted to expend the mental energy on it.

Without hesitating, you lifted the centre console between you, like you had a thousand times before, so you could easily rest your head against Billy's shoulder. His open window sent clean-smelling air streaming into your face, despite the cigarette dangling from his fingers outside, and you closed your eyes to fully breathe it in. When he notices that you've fallen asleep next to him, Billy turns the radio all the way down and basks in the quiet moment with you.

The sun was still pretty high up in the sky when you found yourself jostled awake by the feeling of the Camaro coming to a somewhat abrupt stop over gravel, so you weren't really sure exactly how long had you napped against Billy's side. All you knew for sure was that it hadn't been long enough. Your confused, bleary-eyed gaze makes Billy chuckle under his breath. He waits for you to fully wake up before he is able to secure your full attention.

"Hey," he murmurs, his lips so close to the shell of your ear that you can feel his warm breath ghosting over your skin. Goosebumps cascade down your arms. You resist the urge to nuzzle back into his neck when he urges, "Baby, wake up."

You groan, straightening your spine out and relishing in the way it pops and crunches. You try to listen properly to what Billy is saying to you, but your head feels a little like it has been stuffed full of cotton. You swallow a yawn as you ask, "What's the matter? What did you say?"

"I said," repeats Billy, "this is your last chance to back out of this before we leave Hawkins, forever. I just... want to give you the options. Do you want to go home and forget this ever happened?"

Your eyebrows scrunch together as you try to process what he's saying, looking into his eyes incredulously as his words finally register. The sun is streaming in through the windshield and your skin feels comfortably warm with the cross-breeze still blowing through your open windows. It lights Billy's hair in a way that causes it to luminesce around his cheeks, but the look in his eyes speaks to the seriousness of his inquiry. You could always read him like a book through those eyes. Through the windshield you can see the tall sign professing *Leaving Hawkins, Come Again Soon* in thick white letters that Billy pulled over before passing.

"No," you said, staring at the sign.

"Are you *sure*? Because—"

"I'm positive," you affirmed again.

“–I don’t want you to wake up tomorrow and realize you’ve made a huge mistake–”

“*Billy–!*” you say a little louder, to derail his rambling. His mouth snaps shut, but you can see there’s still more he wants to say. Instead of listening, you open your door and climb out of the car, making a beeline for the trunk. Billy gets out too, calling your name in surprise, but leans over the roof when he realizes you’re just digging in the boot of his car. “I don’t know where we’ll go or what we’ll do when we get there, but I know that I want to do this with you. I want to leave Hawkins and drive through Indiana. To Illinois, to Kansas, New Mexico, Utah, *hell*, I would drive with you all the way back to *California* if that’s what you want. We could get some piece of shit apartment with no furniture and a mattress that we have to use to sleep on the floor because we can’t *afford* a bed frame, and I’d still be happy because I’d be with *you*. I’m all in. So, *my* question is, are you?”

“Of course, but–” started Billy again. You can see a light dusting of pink flourishing around his cheekbones. He moves around the car to reach for you, but you dance out of his grasp.

“Good,” you cut him off, grinning as you managed to pull your father’s old camera from your bag. “Then do me a favour and go pose with the sign so I can commemorate this moment. This is a memory of I want to keep forever.”

It took a ridiculous amount pleading to convince him to go stand next to the sign for you, but when he did, he still had to give you his trademark ‘cool guy’ look. You climbed up on the hood of the Camaro to get a better angle, which Billy protested only slightly. His hands stayed in the pockets of his jeans and the wind was whipping through his hair in a way that you were positive gave the shot some dramatic flair. He regarded you like he wasn’t interested in the photo at all, but you couldn’t care less. Afterwards he came towards you to stand between your knees, easily taking the camera from you to snap one of you on the hood, a couple of you chasing him for the little box back, and then finally one where he had thrown his arm back over your shoulder to pull you into his chest, angling the camera downwards so you were both hopefully in frame.

“I hope you know those are probably all going to be terrible and out of focus,” you grumbled as you put the camera back in the bag. The annoyance in your tone is more playful than sincere. There’s a whole roll of film in that camera that you know has been sitting there unused for ages, and you’re so excited to fill it with new memories... even if they are blurry. Reality was feeling pretty blurry at the moment, anyway.

“Whatever,” scoffed Billy. “I’m an awesome photographer.” You rolled your eyes, running into him with your shoulder. He caught the action and spun you around once instead, successfully disorienting you. You laughed harder; you wrap your arms around his neck and kiss him soundly, telling him to get his ass back into the car.

You turned back towards the Hawkins sign, staring at it for another long moment before you got back into the car with Billy. He turned the key in the ignition until the car rumbled back to life, pulling it off the shoulder and back on the road. The sign was passed and getting smaller in the distance behind you with every passing second.

“Here we go,” he murmured, revving the engine hard so it roared as he gained speed. You leaned forward and cranked the radio back up.

“Illinois, here we come,” you laughed cheerfully. “And after that... who knows?”

### **Author's Note:**

For some reason I have had an unhealthy obsession with this song for the last little while, and I could not believe how well it seemed to fit Billy. It makes me feel an incredible amount of longing. I hope you guys liked it, I really had a lot of fun writing this one! ❀